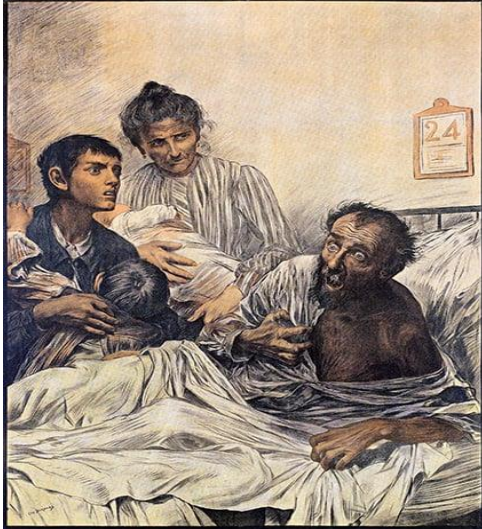


Delirium



Delirium is a sudden and severe change in brain function that causes a person to appear confused or disoriented, or to have difficulties maintaining focus, thinking clearly, and remembering recent events. Delirium can be triggered by a serious illness such as infection, liver-kidney problems, in day immediately following a major surgery, alcohol addiction or other heavy substance addiction.

Delirium develops suddenly, over hours to days and is usually temporary, resolving when the underlying cause is resolved. During Delirium, there are abnormal changes in the person's level of consciousness and thinking. They may be sleepy, or may appear to be depressed and hypoactive or agitated and hyperactive. They often have difficulty maintaining attention/ focus. They may change the subject frequently in a conversation, have difficulty retaining new information, mention strange ideas, may see/ hear strange images/ sounds, or be disoriented (in place or in time).

For Caregivers of Delirium patients:



- Making sure the person gets enough to eat and drink. Help during meals and having them sit properly to minimize the risk of inhaling food, drinks, or saliva. Make sure they drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration. Make sure they get exposure to natural sunlight via windows during the day.

- Maintaining a regular night-day/sleep-wake cycle when possible and avoiding sleep deprivation. Help them stay awake during the day by limiting naps. Keep a small light on at night so that when the patient wakes up, he does not feel fearful.



- **Provide familiar objects and reassuring companionship.** A few family photos can bring some soothing cheer to them. Family or friends at bedside are also often very helpful, especially since they can help gently reorient them to where he is, and what's been going on.

- **Avoid overwhelming or overstimulating the person.** Try to minimize mental strain or emotional stress for the person. (E.g.- multiple visitors, loud noise), which can worsen delirium, but also avoiding under stimulation (darkened room, complete silence).



- **Encourage Movement/ Physical activity.** It's important to encourage safe activity as soon as possible. Help them move around and get out of bed. Encouraging them to get up and sit in a chair during the day. Help them do daily tasks to take care of themselves such as going to the bathroom (with necessary assistance to avoid falls).

- **Way of Communication.** Speak distinctly and at a natural rate of speed. Make sure your tone of speech is light and soft. Resist the temptation to speak loudly. Use simple, direct wording. Present one question, instruction, or statement at a time.



- **Minimize pain and discomforts.** Ask them if they feel bothered by pain or constipation. If so, bring it up to the doctor's attention.
- **Minimizing the use of restraints.** The use of restraints (to tie a person to their bed or chair) is almost never appropriate, as restraints can increase agitation and create additional problems by preventing the person from moving around as needed. However, in the rare situation where the patient is at high risk for harm, monitor the patient at least every two hours, untying the restraints and changing the patient's position.
- Re-orienting them every hour with time, place and person. Show them a Wall clock and calendar and help them monitor it throughout the day.



- **Cognitive Stimulation:**
 - i. Talking about current events or things inside or outside their room.
 - ii. Explaining where they are and why.
 - iii. Letting them read books/ newspapers or read them good news.
 - iv. Playing them music they like or is relaxing.

Delirium Recovery

Delirium decreases their ability to function independently, and they require long-term care. Delirium can be frightening for the patient, as well as for the caregiver or family. Caregivers may feel exhausted and frustrated because of the time and other resources required to take care of a person with delirium. But the better care you provide to them, the fast they will recover from this. Delirium can sometimes resolve within hours to days. In other cases, it takes weeks or months to fully resolve. The caregivers will have to provide assistance in terms of Medications and Self Care.

